



James W. Wilkins
August 27, 1947 – January 6, 2012

James was born in San Jose, California, the fifth of nine children. He spent the first five years of his life in Mississippi with his grandmother. When he returned to San Jose, he started school. During his high school years, James ran track and field and played baseball, football and basketball. Although being labeled as being too small to compete at the high school level during his high school reign, he made the basketball varsity team his senior year because of his skill and technique.

After his high school graduation, James was discovered by a scout to play basketball for Tahoe Paradise College in South Lake Tahoe. He played there two years on a scholarship before transferring to San Diego State. James played two seasons at San Diego State as a starting point guard.

After two years at San Diego State, James was drafted by the Portland Trailblazers in the 11th round pick of the NBA. Although he didn't make the first team, he knew he wanted to play pro basketball. His agent suggested he try out for one of the European teams. James arrived in Hagen, Germany in 1972, and remained on the SSV Hagen team for the next five years.

Winning the German Championship against Heidelberg in his first year, James was voted by the city as 'Athlete of the Year'. The winners were invited to play in the European Cup Games the following year.

In Germany, he met his wife of 35 years, Susanne. In 1982 the Wilkins returned to San Jose. Their son, Dominik, was born in 1988, and their daughter, Vanessa, was born in 1990. James coached baseball for both of his children during their early childhood years. He also coached basketball for both children during their high school careers at Gilroy High School.

When the children left home for college, he continued to support his family in all aspects. He taught his children to remain focused and passionate about anything they wanted to achieve, and to stay strong through challenging times. James was a positive and motivating father and husband who kept encouraging his family through his words and actions. He loved sports with a passion. This hobby gave him joy and happiness. James's favorite basketball team was the Warriors. Nevertheless, his favorite player is Dominik, because, "Dominik reminds me of the way I played... and he's my son!" His daughter was always his all around MVP in sports and in life.

James was a humble and modest human being who never wanted to be a burden to anyone. On the contrary, he was always more than happy to help others instead of himself.

His family will continue to live by his teachings and convictions, and will honor his legacy.

James is survived by his wife Susanne, his son Dominik, and his daughter Vanessa. He is also survived by his mother, Irene Austin, and most of his siblings, nephews, and nieces.

Quotes from James

"Tap into valuable resources from your family and trusted beloved ones for advice when needed, to help keep you moving forward toward your goals."

"All who have a burning desire to win with dignity have to have a focus on continuous improvement."

"No man is an island."

"The early bird catches the worm."

"Have fun but be safe."

"The Wilkins' are no quitters, we will see everything through till the end"

A message from Susanne to James:

"You are the love of my life! You are my shining star! May you shine on your family forever in the sky and remain our guiding light. You are my eternal flame and I will miss you until we will meet again." Love you always, Sue

A message from Vanessa to James:

"Daddy, you are the sun that shines through me and the brightest star in the sky at night that twinkles in the corner of my eye. Even though you have passed on to another realm, you are still alive in my heart and mind. May you always guide me like the wind. You will never be lost in my thoughts and whenever I am in doubt I will look to the stars for reassurance. I will miss you forever and love you for eternity. We will meet again." Love you always, Punkin

A message from Dominik to James:

"Nothing in life will ever begin to explain how I feel about you and what you mean to me. Ever since I was a child, the only person I ever wanted to be in life and dream of becoming was you. I know that I can't promise that now, Dad. But what I can promise you is that I will try my best to take everything you taught me throughout the greatest twenty three years a human being could ever have and continue to work on becoming half of the person you were. You always taught me to be a leader of my own magnitude, but I have always and will forever follow you!" Love always, Buddy



